1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

Specialization and Trade

439 Among the more distinctive features of upper Xingú culture are community craft specialization and a widespread system of trade relationships. The Trumaí traded among themselves, but the most important exchanges took place on the intertribal level, and it is here that the products of tribal specialization become significant to the economy. At the time of Quain's investigations, the Arawakans maintained a monopoly on pottery, but the once active Trumaí stone axe manufacture had fallen into disuse. In its place, the Trumaí were specializing in the preparation of salt, obtained by burning a species of water-lily and sifting the ashes. The Trumaí depended on the Kamayurá for a highly prized type of bow, as the proper wood was not found in their territory. According to Oberg, this black, rectangular bow was eagerly sought by other tribes, also.[20]

While the Kamayurá monopoly on these bows can be explained by the local availability of the raw materials, craft specialization cannot be looked upon simply as a function of the exclusive possession of certain skills. Other arts diffused rapidly among the tribes, and it is evident that the specialties remained such for non-economic reasons. For example, the three Arawakan tribes, the Mehinaku, Kustenaú and Waurá, all made pottery, but each traded their wares only with certain tribes. The Bacairí obtained their pottery from the Kustenaú, who were, in von den Steinen's time, their neighbors on the Batoví River. On the Kuliseu, the Nahukwa traded for ceramics with the nearby Mehinaku, while the Tupian-speaking tribes and the Trumaí relied on the Waurá. Despite the fact that each Arawakan tribe dealt with its nearest neighbors, the exclusiveness of these relationships is not a physical necessity. The Trumaí could have obtained Mehinaku pottery. They had many kinship ties with the Mehinaku, and even conducted joint puberty rites. The distance between them was not great. Manifestly some standardized channeling of trade relationships existed.

This is further confirmed by the confinement of pottery manufacture to the Arawakans. It is probable that when the various groups first settled in the area, the Arawakans were the only ceramicists. With the development of close intertribal relationships, however, there was every opportunity for the craft to diffuse. It could have been learned by outsiders in trips to Arawakan villages and then practiced at home, as the clay is easily gotten from the river bottoms. Obvious means for its diffusion were marriage or capture of Arawakan women. But the manufacture of pottery was not observed by Quain in any non-Arawakan village of the area, despite the fact that Arawakan women were living in many such communities. In the Trumaí village no pottery was made,

[20] Oberg 1953, p. 30.

/203 cont./

proper, we started first with the primitive peoples, we should not fail to recognize that there is Paleolithic as well as Neolithic work among them even today, depending on the kind of stone available, the material provided from another quarter, and the technical purposes present. We should see that the negative term "metal-less" is, of course, appropriate, but that the positive name "Stone Age" can be very unfortunate. We should also consider the case where man has no stones at all or unsuitable ones and still makes excellent tools and weapons. As an unprejudiced observer, it would scarcely have occurred to me to maintain that the Schingú Indians are living in the "Stone Age."

It is certainly true that their most difficult accomplishments -- clearing the forest, building houses, building canoes, making stools, and the like -- go back to the stone ax. But the various tribes were entirely dependent on one source, which was in the possession of the Trumaí. Neither the Bakaïrí nor the Nahuquá nor the Mehinakú /Mehinacu/ and their relatives, nor the Auetö nor Kamayurá /Camayura/ had stone axes of their own manufacture. Their sandstone was not suitable for axes. I have asserted exactly the same thing about the former times of the docilê Bakaïrí of the Paranatinga: in this region the Kayabi /Cayabi/ had a monopoly on the stone axes; the neighboring Bakaïrí were obliged to get them from them, later their deadly enemies. The tribes of the Batovy, Kulisehu, and Kuluêne obtained their stone axes from the Trumaí (the Suyá living on the main river had some of their own). Thus, the stone ax is presented to us here as an import article.

Fig. 20.
Stone ax.
(1/8 nat. size /as shown in the original illustration/.

In answer to my inquiries, I was told that the stones were found "along a brook in the sand." The material has been identified by Herr Professor Arzruni /204/ of Aachen as diabase, a rock consisting of augite, plagioclase, mica, chlorite, and magnetite, in which are

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embedded individual crystals of olivine and quite a number of quartz granules. The blades, 11-21 centimeters long, are usually evenly cylindrical, but some are round in the center like a roller, taper toward the rear, and have a broad front end with a bow-shaped cutting edge. Without any lashing, they fit into a wooden handle 0.5 meters long on the average, which consists of a cylindrical upper piece bored crosswise and a thinner handle set off from this like a reed stalk from its spike. The stone points inserted in the darts and the ornamental stones of the neck chains are made of the same diabase. The Trumaí ground the blades to a point on their stones and bored the ornamental stones; besides them, only the neighboring Yaulapiti did this. The other tribes simply sharpened on the river sandstone the axes that became dull. Shells and stones were bored with a twirl-borer. A triangular, hard splinter of stone was clamped to a small staff, and, to be sure, at both ends so that one could alternate them, and was secured by cord lashing. The little staff was almost half a meter long and was twirled between the hands. If stone was to be bored, sand was added. This is all the Indians achieved in the working of stone; they had

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Fig. 21.
Twirl-borer.*
(1/2 nat. size/ as shown in the original illustration/.)

*The twirl-staff is represented discontinuously.